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President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST THE ILLICIT PRODUCTION, SALE, DEMAND, TRAFFIC AND DISTRIBUTION OF NARCOTICS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST THE ILLICIT PRODUCTION, SALE, DEMAND, TRAFFIC AND DISTRIBUTION OF NARCOTICS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES (continued) (E/1996/18, E/1996/57)

Mr. REYN (Observer for Belgium) said that the drugs menace could be dealt with only through international cooperation. His Government was actively involved in fighting drugs at the international level and had ratified all international instruments on the subject. It was totally opposed to the legalization of any narcotic substances.

Initially, anti-drug policy had been geared exclusively towards repression; that approach had failed compelling the authorities to rethink their strategy. Drug control resources had been redeployed and Government efforts were now equally divided between preventive, curative and repressive measures; they included expansion and diversification of drug-related health-care funded from confiscated drug revenues; improved and better-organized care for addicts; more focused public awareness campaigns; research; provision of facilities to reintegrate addicts into society; and a wider array of police and judicial measures to crack down on drug dealing.

In order to be effective, regional anti-drug initiatives must be combined with international efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had a vital role to play in the worldwide fight against narcotic substances, and greater efforts should be made by Member States to ensure that their strategies and resources were more closely coordinated.

Mr. COKREVSKI (Observer for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the illicit production, circulation and trafficking of narcotic substances was an international threat, as were the international criminal groups engaged in such activities and in drug-related crime.

One of the root causes of the problem was that many traditional values were no longer respected or had been abandoned altogether. That kind of social situation provided fertile ground for drug abuse, particularly among the young.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was a transit point on drug routes through the Balkans, and the competent State authorities had long been employing various measures to prevent drug-related crime. Some of their initiatives had been successful, for example disrupting the activities of organized drug runners. His Government had acceded to the United Nations conventions on narcotics and was acting in accordance with the provisions thereof. The provisions of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances had been incorporated into the country's new Criminal Code, the Law on Criminal Proceedings and the Law on Narcotics, all of which were in the process of being ratified by the national parliament. In addition, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was building a modern, skilled and professional police force which would acquire expertise through an exchange of experience with other police forces around the world. His Government had also been active in anti-drugs cooperation at the regional and European level.

Mr. ZELTNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that much had been done by the international community in recent years to combat the drug menace, but the efforts had achieved mixed results. The international community should not allow itself to be discouraged by setbacks, but should take the opportunity to critically evaluate future strategies; it should do so in a spirit of open-mindedness, ready to learn from the experiences of others and prepared to experiment where necessary. In particular, regional measures needed to be planned with an eye to their global impact.

The Swiss Government was also concerned at the seeming incompatibility between observance of human rights on the one hand and greater police powers to combat the drug menace on the other. That dilemma affected both newly established and long-established democracies. Greater information was needed about the comparative advantages and disadvantages of giving the police more power. Studies on the subject were extremely scarce, and he appealed to Member States to conduct relevant research which could then serve as a basis for discussion by the international community.

Mr. AL-TAHAWY (Egypt) said that his country had played an active role in efforts to combat the drug problem, and was convinced of the need for international cooperation. As part of the United Nations Global Programme of Action Egypt had trained law enforcement officers for the Arab countries and

newly independent Commonwealth States; and it had hosted a recent meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies.

Because of its geographical position Egypt was a transit point for drugs, mainly cannabis. Egypt exchanged information with many countries to reduce the production and import of cannabis, which was consumed locally, and had drawn up a number of bilateral conventions on drugs. As a result, the price of cannabis had risen in Egypt.

His Government was in the process of adopting new legislation concerning money-laundering which would take into consideration the 40 recommendations made by the Group of 77 and the United Nations in 1993. It had established a National Council for the Control and Treatment of Drug Addiction, headed by the Prime Minister and had also brought Egyptian Narcotics Law into line with the United Nations Vienna Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).

Egypt meted out severe punishment to officials who were found guilty of abuses of power and corruption. Those who used or dealt in drugs but who gave themselves up to the authorities were exempt from punishment and received treatment.

Since 1991 the United Nations had played a leading role in the worldwide fight against drugs, and had helped Egypt strengthen its national mechanism against drugs thereby preventing it from becoming a producer country.

His delegation expressed concern at the limited volume of assistance given to the campaign against drugs internationally. Egypt, despite its economic difficulties, offered token assistance to the United Nations in the hope that other States and international financial bodies would follow suit and provide more funds to combat drugs, without interfering in the internal affairs of States or impinging on their sovereignty.

Egypt considered that it would be useful to have a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 devoted to strengthening international cooperation to combat drugs and psychotropic substances.

Ms. FERRERO-WALDNER (Observer for Austria), complementing the statement by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union, said that since its inception, UNDCP had concentrated on the need to include drug control elements in development strategies and to place the drug issue at the top of the agenda with regard to international cooperation in the economic and

social fields. Indeed, the institutional effort made by the United Nations during the first half of the United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse (1991 to 2000) had been remarkable. UNDCP had assumed its leadership role within the institutional system and had developed a System-wide Action Plan, which should serve as a basis for individual agencies to plan, develop and implement drug control activities.

Cooperation had also been greatly expanded with organizations such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. In that context her delegation urged the establishment of a joint unit on money-laundering. Work with UNDCP had been promising, but required further strengthening. More also needed to be done in cooperation with the international finance institutions.

In addition, the Austrian Government urgently wished to see the development of a comprehensive and unified information system with reliable data on illicit drug trafficking. The drug menace should be countered by a comprehensive approach that encompassed demand reduction as well as supply reduction. The action of the United Nations system was as indispensable as that of individual Member States, groups of States and the involvement of civil society. UNDCP's information and analysis role should prepare the ground for sound policy decisions. Its advocacy role should motivate all players into making their contribution. Its technical cooperation capacity should be available to assist countries at their request, to implement model projects and to fill gaps left by other international efforts.

International drug control should remain a top priority of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1998-2000; UNDCP's leadership role in the United Nations system should be reconfirmed; it should be provided with the financial resources to fulfil its specialized leadership function; and Governments should pledge to overcome legal and practical barriers to the promotion of effective international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of drug traffickers.

Mr. WOLZFELD (Luxembourg) said that a global, integrated and diversified approach was needed to the multifaceted problem of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. Subsequent to its ratification of the 1988 United Nations Convention, his Government had established a fund to combat drug trafficking

with the goal of elaborating, coordinating and implementing the measures it had taken in fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention.

The social dimension of drug abuse was undoubtedly the most visible, and prevention within an integrated approach had proven to be the best weapon. Education programmes had been undertaken, both in the schools and at the local government level, along with rehabilitation programmes. Luxembourg had also begun to record some positive results from the methadone programmes targeted at long-term addicts who had not succeeded with other treatments.

The United Nations provided the international community with the most appropriate framework for the development of a coordinated approach to drug control. Luxembourg supported the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 devoted to combating drug abuse. It hoped that the new System-wide Action Plan would bear fruit and in conclusion paid tribute to the efforts of UNDCP.

Mr. PATOKALLIO (Finland) said that, from the report of the Secretary-General, it could be concluded that the distinction between consumer and producer countries had long ago lost its relevance. Drug abuse and trafficking were driven by the vast gaps in standards of living and in equality of opportunity. The drug problem must also be seen in the context of development: poverty was one of the important underlying causes of drug production and consumption. Promoting alternative income-generating opportunities and alleviation of poverty was one effective way to approach the problem in developing countries. Efforts to promote good governance and increased political accountability, through democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and anti-corruption measures, were also vital.

The economic and political transformation of post-communist societies had brought market forces to bear on the nascent democracies, but unfortunately, that very transformation had also provided better opportunities for drug trafficking. In the light of those changes in its eastern European neighbours, Finland had been obliged to review its drug policy. It had witnessed a marked increase in the risk of being exposed to international drug trafficking, as a transit country, and had pursued an approach focusing on reduction of both supply and demand in its subregion.

In Finland, social services, including treatment and rehabilitation, were universally accessible, which had contributed to the prevention of the drug

problem. Future risks were mainly associated with continued high unemployment rates among young people. Alcohol was the most frequently abused intoxicant, and a combined approach to alcohol and drugs had been employed.

The valuable work on demand reduction undertaken by UNDCP should be supplemented by enhanced regional and subregional cooperation. The ambitious tasks and goals for UNDCP set out five years earlier were threatened by its diminishing resources. Broadening the donor base by increasing the sense of ownership might be a way forward, but much discussion was still needed on how that could be accomplished.

Mr. McCAFFREY (United States of America) said that his Government was well aware that it could not fight drug abuse and trafficking alone, and paid tribute to the work of UNDCP and United Nations leadership in that area. The fight against drug abuse had been the highest internal priority in the United States for the past 15 years, and some significant progress had been made in demand reduction. Since 1980, the number of regular drug abusers had dropped from 23 million to 11 million; cocaine use was down by 30 per cent.

Nevertheless, major challenges remained. Among adolescents use of cigarettes and alcohol had increased alarmingly and drug abuse had doubled, indicating that a new generation needed to be educated about its dangers. The United States Government would not legalize drug use, and had vigorously enforced its laws against drug use and trafficking. As a result, over 1 million people were currently imprisoned for drug-related offences, but it was clear that police action would not solve the problem, and that education must be at the centre of all efforts. The 2.7 million drug addicts in the United States out of a total population of 265 million was a relatively small number, but represented an enormous cost to society. An approach combining treatment with law enforcement was aimed at that group. In the light of recent experience, the Government had changed its approach from the so-called "war on drugs" to focus on treatment and rehabilitation as the best means to reduce the violence and other ills associated with drug addiction.

The problem was not United States demand, but the production of illegal drugs. A number of Governments, notably Peru, Mexico, Thailand and Brazil, had made great strides in reducing production, for which the United States was grateful. A final solution to the problem would be found only through the work

of international and regional organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations, however.

Mr. BĚLOHLÁVEK (Czech Republic) said that increased consumption and abuse of drugs in the Czech Republic was largely a by-product of trade liberalization and the opening of frontiers since 1989. His country was located along the so-called "Balkan route", and in fact, the recent rise in standards of living had transformed it from a transit country to a target country. With the expansion of international trade, intensified international cooperation in drug seizures was particularly welcome.

The Czech Republic had ratified all three of the major international drug conventions, and was in the process of introducing international legal norms into its domestic legislation. It was amending its penal code to include a number of provisions to combat drug dealing and to regulate the handling of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor and essential chemicals.

The strategy for primary prevention of drug abuse was aimed at children and young people. Most drug users in the Czech Republic were secondary school and university students from the higher social strata who were experimenting with drugs to test social limits or because they had no positive ways to use their leisure time. Education and peer prevention programmes were the main components of the prevention strategy.

The Czech Republic believed that, by respecting the principle of voluntary contributions and not fixing set quotas, the current difficulties in financing UNDCP could be overcome so that it could continue and broaden its work.

Mr. MOHAMED (Guyana) said that no country, developed or developing, could afford to be complacent about the problem of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. Because of its economic limitations, Guyana could not provide the human and material resources required to detect and interdict the quantity of illicit drugs transshipped through its territory. The slow pace of the establishment of legal machinery to deal with drug-related matters and the inexperience of its financial institutions in dealing with money-laundering further heightened the risk of penetration and corruption. Guyana's situation was not unique; its sister States in the Caribbean, by virtue of their geographic location, were especially vulnerable to drug trafficking. At a recent meeting, the countries of that region had adopted a number of measures to strengthen the regional machinery to withstand further encroachment by drug

trafficking. Alliances must be formed at the international level as well, however.

The goal of international cooperation should be to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to play a more effective role in the fight against drugs. Possible measures could include a strong and sustained educational campaign on the consequences of drug trafficking and abuse, development and implementation of legal, regulatory and administrative mechanisms, training of personnel in drug-related disciplines, financial, technical and material support, incentives to encourage drug cultivators to engage in traditional agriculture and establishing and managing drug information systems. In the current international environment of heavy debt burdens and diminishing levels of assistance, development agencies within the United Nations system might reorient their programmes to assist in such a campaign. A strong argument could be made for the establishment of a trust fund to support developing countries in their efforts to combat drug trafficking. The preventive approaches currently being emphasized would, in the long run, be less costly to the international community as a whole.

Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that the globalization of drug production and trafficking had made it both more difficult and more imperative to find new ways to safeguard the security and development of countries most affected by that scourge.

Among the countries most vulnerable to drugs were those with weak economic and political structures, few drug control agencies and few or no appropriate regulatory provisions for dealing with drug-related problems. Their economic and political stability was threatened by drug trafficking and money-laundering, while drug abuse engendered high social and economic costs. There was a very real risk that powerful criminal organizations in those countries could undermine the public and private sectors, through corruption or the establishment of outright control over them.

The international community had taken many steps to deal with the drug phenomenon, and yet the scale of the problem had grown inexorably, acting as an obstacle to development. More must be done to reverse that trend.

For its part, Tunisia had adopted a number of legal instruments to prevent the country from being used for the transit for illicit drug trafficking, to educate young people about drugs and to help rehabilitate drug addicts. It had

also been active in a number of related regional and interregional drug control initiatives.

The underlying premise of those activities was that drug control and trafficking could not be divorced from the issues of development and poverty eradication. Only through economic revitalization and development of producer States could the vicious circle of drug production and distribution be broken.

In that effort the assistance of the United Nations system was vital, for it could help countries with the implementation of global drug control policies. UNDCP should continue the vital work of promoting, mediating and coordinating international action. One way of reversing the general reduction in the level of resources allocated to the Programme might be to allocate to it some of the confiscated proceeds from illicit drug trafficking.

Given the scale of the drug problem, discussion of control measures should continue not only at the current session, but also at a special session of the General Assembly in 1998.

Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua) said that the economic, political and social change had only served to exacerbate drug abuse and facilitate drug trafficking, with criminal organizations exploiting the liberalization process to take over legitimate sectors of economic activity. Discussions in the Council and at other international forums should focus on legalization of the proceeds from drug trafficking.

In the past, the principle of banking secrecy had helped keep the money-laundering problem hidden from public view. Greater openness and realism had changed all that, adding cogency to the argument put forward by some in favour of an international instrument against money-laundering to be devised within the context of the United Nations.

Support for such a response had grown, as the world had come to realize that the drug problem transcended national boundaries and required an integrated approach which still preserved the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Mindful of the vast economic power of the international drug market, the international community should act to support UNDCP as the appropriate forum for international cooperation to combat drugs.

For its part, the Government of Nicaragua had taken a number of initiatives to counter the effects of drug-related problems. Bringing together representatives from youth organizations, the police and justice departments, as

well as relevant government ministries, it had established the Nicaraguan Drug Council to coordinate national drug control strategies and programmes. The Council had set up a documentation centre, which would tap into the national data bank and exchange information with regional and international agencies, with a view to enhancing cooperation between them.

In terms of legislation, Nicaragua had passed a law in 1994 which reflected the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988). That law provided for the creation of a commission to control banking and financial operations relating to money-laundering. Consideration would also be given to a bill aimed at stopping drug organizations from infiltrating legitimate commercial and financial sectors of the economy. The bill, which provided for the creation of an inter-institutional commission on money-laundering and a raft of related crimes, also aimed at establishing international judicial cooperation in those areas. Given its firm belief in the importance of international cooperation against drugs, Nicaragua had also signed a number of agreements with States in the region and elsewhere.

Nicaragua endorsed the view that development and drug control were inextricably linked. Without effective assistance from the United Nations and from bilateral partners, the developing world would continue to face serious difficulties with the drug problem. Nicaragua believed the scale of the problem was such as to merit an extraordinary session of the General Assembly in 1998.

Ms. STEWART (Canada) said that her Government endorsed the view that only concerted action could help combat drug abuse and trafficking and their damaging effects, particularly on children and youth. Thus, it hoped that the high-level segment would send three key messages to the world: that States should assume responsibility for drug control; that bilateral, regional and international cooperation was vital; and that inter-agency cooperation should be strengthened in order to deal effectively with drug-related problems.

Mindful of those messages, Canada had supported a number of national, regional and inter-agency activities aimed at demand reduction and drug control. It had offered financial support both to a recent workshop on drug control held in Barbados and to the efforts of the working group of experts from the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, seeking to elaborate a declaration of principles on demand reduction. In addition to signing bilateral accords on judicial

cooperation, Canada had organized training courses and information exchange. Believing firmly in the important work of UNDCP, Canada had allocated $1 million to the Programme for the 1996-1997 period, and supported the suggestion that resources from the regular budget of the United Nations should be reallocated to it. More work should be done to strengthen the links between United Nations bodies and regional institutions.

More needed to be done also to tackle the pervasive problem of corruption, which threatened to undermine entire sectors of certain societies. The international code for public officials, approved by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, was a modest step in the right direction, and should be approved by the Council so that it could be submitted for adoption by the General Assembly.

In the meantime, the Council should concentrate on establishing practical and effective cooperation between all agencies and bodies involved in drug control. The Council owed it to the individual victims of drugs, and to afflicted States in the developing world to help formulate a concerted response to a problem that threatened the future of the global community.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the escalating trend in drug abuse and the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs had become a grave and persistent menace to both nations and individuals and a challenge to political, economic, social and cultural structures. A comprehensive approach was called for to deal with both the supply of and demand for drugs. Reduction in both supply and demand should be seen as mutually reinforcing elements of an all-encompassing strategy.

His delegation had been disappointed by the timid recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report, and presumed that such diffident recommendations had been made deliberately in order to allow the participants in the high-level segment to suggest bold policy measures.

In the economic field, his Government endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation on the establishment of partnerships between economic policy-making and drug control authorities, the development of mechanisms to facilitate multilateral decision-making and action against money-laundering, and reinforcement of partnerships between development and drug control programmes. Pakistan also supported the package on the social dimension, with its emphasis on youth.

The answer to the mushrooming drug problem was not to revamp the United Nations drug control machinery but to strengthen it and make it operate more effectively; the Programme had not been given realistic opportunities to fulfil its mandate and role. The declining trend in UNDCP funding from the regular budget ran counter to pious affirmations that priority should be given to drug control.

His Government had declared war on narcotics production, processing, trafficking and abuse, and had taken measures to eradicate the production of the opium poppy and cannabis. In addition, it had taken steps to treat and rehabilitate addicts and activate community intervention on drug abuse. An effective legislative and administrative framework had been created to equip the law enforcement agencies to fight the problem.

Pakistan was a signatory to numerous United Nations conventions on narcotics, and in order to bring national legislation into line with the provisions of those instruments, the Government had promulgated an ordinance to amend the law relating to punishment for drug trafficking by prescribing the severest penalty and confiscation of assets. Despite current political difficulties, the Government of Pakistan had welcomed UNDCP's initiative to sponsor direct consultations between India and Pakistan in the field of drug control.

In order to adopt a multi-dimensional strategy, Member States needed to recognize that the main responsibility for reducing drug abuse lay with the traditional consumer countries. Additional blueprints needed to be developed to implement the regional and subregional strategies of UNDCP and greater priority needed to be given to the development of national drug control programmes. Free flow of information in police work and improvement of extradition procedures were imperative, and recommendations on money-laundering should be strictly implemented and adapted to various national legislations.

States needed to recognize that mere criminalization of drugs did not offer a lasting solution; drug addicts should be reintegrated into society through rehabilitation. Law-enforcement measures should be supplemented by prevention and treatment initiatives in the social and health sectors. However, Pakistan opposed legalization or decriminalization of the use of drugs. Finally, crop substitution policies should be supplemented by measures aimed to improve the

social environment and accelerate economic development in order to reduce the cultivation of illicit crops.

Mr. MAGANGA (Gabon) said that drug abuse had become a major scourge which not only affected individuals, the environment and economic development but also promoted organized crime. Given the difficulties which many countries faced in confronting the challenge, the international community had adopted a number of instruments aimed at promoting greater international cooperation in combating the production, supply, trafficking and illicit distribution of narcotic drugs.

Gabon had adhered to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, and had ratified the 1961 and 1971 Conventions. It had created an inter-ministerial commission against drug addiction and had prepared draft legislation with UNDCP assistance aimed at bringing its national laws into line with the international instruments and at coordinating national and subregional anti-drug strategies. A central anti-drug office had also been created to combat illicit drug trafficking, provide technical coordination and centralize all information on narcotic drugs.

No country was immune to the problem. Producer countries in the developing world, which traditionally were not large consumers, were experiencing an increase in local drug use. Moreover, weak political, economic and judicial structures made them targets of choice for drug traffickers and money-launderers, thereby blurring the traditional distinction between producer, consumer and transit countries.

Drug traffickers controlled colossal sums of money. Their annual turnover in 1994 was estimated by certain sources to be between 400 and 500 billion United States dollars. Morality aside, it was time to consider whether a portion of the assets confiscated by national authorities should not be used to supplement the inadequate voluntary contributions currently available to UNDCP for the discharge of its important mandate, as had been proposed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

His Government regretted the decision to close the regional UNDCP office which had been located in Gabon until 1995. The decision had left the door open for criminals to exploit the weaknesses of the existing structures in the subregion. Gabon nevertheless remained committed to the international

community's efforts to combat narcotic drugs and supported the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly on the subject.

Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that the increasingly widespread abuse of narcotic drugs posed a threat to the social fabric of affected countries. Attempts to reverse the current trend of drug abuse were proving to be a formidable challenge to national Governments, particularly those of the developing countries.

International travel and increasing transboundary commodity flows had contributed to the globalization of drug-related criminal activities. The criminals involved in drug trafficking had at their disposal colossal resources to protect and expand their activities. Indeed, the amount of laundered money available to the criminals was greater than the gross national product of three quarters of the world's economies.

It was therefore imperative that all countries join in efforts to address the problem. The choice of that issue as the theme of the Council's substantive session of 1996 was a major step in the direction of an integrated global response and paved the way for a special session of the General Assembly to be devoted to the suppression of the illicit production, sale and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

An essential component of the international effort to combat drug abuse was the strengthening of the regional and subregional response through the implementation of appropriate legal instruments. In 1990, for example, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had adopted a regional convention to more effectively address the various aspects of prevention and control of drug abuse and the suppression of illicit traffic in the narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances specific to the SAARC region.

The success of the international response depended, however, on an appropriate response at the national level. Bangladesh had strengthened its legal provisions and bolstered law enforcement measures to combat drug-related crimes. Almost all narcotic drugs and most psychotropic substances entered Bangladesh from neighbouring countries. More vigilant countermeasures would enable the country to determine the extent of illicit trafficking through its territory and, with the assistance of the international community and of UNDCP in particular, to take remedial measures.

Mr. DEJAMMET (France) said that the United Nations was the organ best suited to the task of coordinating an effective international response to the complex problem of drug abuse. The many initiatives launched by the Organization were a reflection of the international community's grave concern over the problem and its difficulty in coming up with proposals for a long-term solution. The situation was compounded by the rapidly changing nature of the problem. The traditional dichotomy between producer and consumer countries had disappeared with the emergence of new drugs and new consumption patterns, while illicit trafficking was carried on in increasingly innovative ways. The United Nations should therefore assess the situation on a regular basis and adapt its strategy to the new developments, while continuing to pursue certain basic objectives.

Priority areas for international action included the ratification and implementation of the international Conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988, which required that national legislation should be brought into line with their provisions; strengthening of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB); reaffirmation of the key coordinating role of UNDCP within the United Nations system and expansion of its funding base; and support for the Global Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its seventeenth special session.

International coordination was especially needed in the economic and social fields. The economic impact of drug trafficking in all its ramifications, including money-laundering, was considerable and it was essential to coordinate efforts to reduce both demand and supply, suppress trafficking and related criminal activity and implement alternative development programmes in producer countries. Special emphasis should be placed on combating money-laundering through the enactment of legislation which was in conformity with the three United Nations Conventions in that field.

In social terms, drug addiction posed its greatest threat to the youngest, most fragile and most disadvantaged members of society. The HIV/AIDS epidemic had further increased the risks for drug addicts. Drug abuse was a danger not only to the health of populations but also to the balance of the social structure. The situation therefore required not only programmes to treat drug addicts and reintegrate them into society but also a vigorous policy of prevention with the active participation of public authorities and local communities.

Those priority objectives must be pursued without delay. France would urge its partners in the Group of Seven to place the subject of drug abuse high on the Group's agenda. France firmly supported the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly in 1998, since it would provide an occasion to review the progress achieved.

Mr. CAMACHO OMISTE (Observer for Bolivia) said that drug abuse was closely linked to social and economic development both in producer and consumer countries and it was therefore at that level that the problem needed to be addressed.

Bolivia's policy to combat the global threat of drug abuse was based on prevention, interdiction, destruction of illegal coca crops and alternative development. Given his country's particular situation, emphasis had been placed on the last three approaches. Only 12,000 of the approximately 30,000 hectares of coca were legally planted and the excess production was currently subject to voluntary destruction at a cost of nearly US$ 21 million for 1995 and the first five months of 1996. Thirty thousand rural families were currently abandoning coca cultivation in favour of alternative crops, while some 20,000 others earned their living exclusively from planting coca. Mindful of the social and economic impact of the destruction of crops, the Government of Bolivia maintained an ongoing dialogue with rural coca producers in an attempt to forestall social unrest. In addition, the authorities had recently destroyed cocaine factories and laboratories, seized large quantities of drugs and precursors, and detained a large number of persons involved in drug trafficking.

It was unfortunate, however, that, notwithstanding the principle of shared responsibility, poor countries were being called upon to make the most sacrifices. The continued effectiveness of Bolivia's anti-drug policies depended on increased international cooperation. It was imperative for consumer countries to establish verifiable demand reduction goals under the supervision of the International Narcotics Control Board. Without effective demand reduction programmes, efforts to stop the illegal planting and production of drugs were doomed to failure. The problem of money-laundering also needed to be tackled through the enactment of appropriate domestic legislation and the establishment of strict regulatory mechanisms.

His Government welcomed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to consider the problem of illicit drugs. It was only through

coordinated international efforts, respect for the sovereignty and dignity of States and recognition of the principle of shared responsibility that success could be achieved.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.